

A
LETTER
FROM
BEELZEBUB,
ADDRESSED TO
A CHRISTIAN CHURCH
IN
EDINBURGH:
OR, A
SUPPLEMENT TO A PAMPHLET,
ENTITLED,
CHRIST THE TRUE REST;
OR, THE
JEWISH SABBATH A TYPE OF CHRIST.

-----highly they rag'd-----
Hurling defiance tow'rd the vault of heav'n.

MILTON,

Chester:

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1792.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following pages were first published at EDINBURGH, about sixteen years ago, and it is but a few months since that a copy of them was accidentally brought into this part of the kingdom, where, until then, it seems to have been unknown. It is now re-printed *chiefly* to gratify the wishes of a few individuals, who have in vain sought to possess themselves of it—the former impression having been long wholly sold off.

It seems, nevertheless, proper to add, that although the occasion of its first publication was *peculiar* (as will readily appear to an attentive reader of it) yet, as the pernicious sentiments, so ably and happily refuted by it, at least some of them, are common enough to other sects of religious professors, it is thought the re-publication of it may not be without its use, even in this part of the kingdom:—The probability of which, the Editor hopes, will be admitted by the candour of the author, as an apology for the freedom he takes of now re-printing it without his knowledge or consent.



W. J.

Chester, March 15, 1792.

A
L E T T E R
FROM
B E E L Z E B U B,
ADDRESSED TO A
CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN EDINBURGH.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THOUGH gratitude cannot well be reckoned in the catalogue of my virtues, yet I cannot help acknowledging my obligations to you, for the notable service you have done me by your late publication, and which you have entitled, *Christ the true Rest*, with the same propriety that you style yourselves, *A Christian Church*. The publishing your sentiments to the world shews such an inviolable attachment to my interest, such zeal and resolution in my service, as is not to be shaken by any reproaches or sufferings you may meet with on my account. I have this to boast of all my true servants, that they are disinterested in their services, which shews the purity of their love; for they have no ground to expect any reward from me either here or hereafter, but on the contrary have much to fear; which is more than can be said for the followers of Jesus, for none of them serve God for nought.

The keeping of the first day of the week among Christians has been a great eye-sore to me, as indeed are all the institutions of the gospel, because they tend to bring to view, and rivet upon men's minds, the impressions of divine things to which I bear a mortal antipathy. I see plainly, that whilst there is a day in seven set apart from worldly business,

ness, and appropriated to public worship and instruction, there will always be some face of Christianity in the world in spite of all my endeavours. I have tried various artifices to bring this and every other ordinance of the gospel into disrepute, and if possible into disuse, and have succeeded pretty well with a great part of professors with respect to their practice; yet, even among these, there are many weak brethren who cannot get rid of certain occasional qualms of conscience on account of their conduct. This weakness, I observe, arises from some remains of a superstitious regard for the Bible. It would be a glorious achievement could I prevail with men to lay aside that book altogether; but though I have had legions of infidels and Deists employed in this undertaking from the very beginning of Christianity, it is still held in some estimation among men. As therefore we cannot get rid of it altogether, we must make the best use of it for our purpose we can. Perhaps it would not be altogether to my advantage that the Scriptures were entirely thrown aside. You have very justly observed, that "I never work more effectually than under the wing of the Holy Ghost;" for by handling the word of God deceitfully my schemes obtain a religious sanction, and must consequently have the greater success with those who are not entirely loosed from revelation. It indeed requires some skill to manage this matter properly. Such passages of Scripture as cannot easily be bended to our purpose, must be darkened or rendered dubious, or others set in opposition to them to destroy their force; a criticism is of great service upon occasion, and a mystical sense is often useful to set aside plain common sense; we must sometimes make use of the sound of words to combat the sense; at other times it will be necessary to explain words in one connection by the sense they bear in another. But if still the plain sense of Scripture should beam thro' all these artifices, we must then confront it with bold assertions, or tack to it the most ridiculous absurdities and dreadful consequences. In these arts of manufacturing Scripture you have made surprising proficiency; but as some may not perceive, at first sight, the principles upon which you proceed, nor advert to the force of your arguments, their main drift and tendency, or the length to which they may fairly be carried, it may not be improper that

that I should open up the matter a little farther, in order to explain and corroborate what you have already advanced.

It is not my intention at present to consider your arguments so much in relation to the first day of the week, as in their subserviency to the grand cause of infidelity. I have no particular pique at one day of the week more than another, but in as far as it is set apart to promote the interest of religion; and as the most effectual way to get rid of this is, by a blow at the root of revelation itself, I cannot better express my gratitude, or shew my obligations to you, than by setting forth the direct tendency of your arguments to this glorious end. But if in doing this, it should be necessary to ascertain the genuine *sense* of some passages of Scripture which you impugn, I hope you will not understand me as maintaining the *truth* of such passages; on the contrary, my design is to shew, that, according to your arguments, the Scriptures must necessarily be false. I own it was proper for you to keep some measures with the prejudices of mankind, by appearing to admit the *truth* of the Scriptures, whilst you ventured only to deny the *sense*; but there is no occasion for such cautious reserve betwixt intimate friends, like you and I, who understand one another's meaning, and have the same interest at heart.

The resurrection of Jesus is the chief evidence of the truth of the Christian faith, and which fully determined the controversy about his being the Christ. If this fact be not true, the consequence is, that the Apostles are false witnesses, the faith of Christians is vain, they are yet in their sins, and they who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished. Every attempt therefore to render this point dubious, is a blow at the root of the whole Christian system. To deny the fact point blank, would be rather too bold an attack at first hand; it was prudent in you, therefore, to make your approaches in form, first by demolishing the outworks, and then proceeding by way of covert-sap till at last the whole is undermined; for it is evident, that if the *circumstances* of the resurrection be denied, the fact itself must needs be denied also; because they are both supported by the same evidence, viz. Scripture testimony, which if it fails in one, must fail in both. You deny that Jesus rose on the first day of the week, or third day from

his crucifixion, and affirm, that the day of his resurrection is as uncertain as the day of his second coming, p. 2—6. But there can be no doubt about the day on which Jesus arose, without doubting the truth of the Scriptures, which plainly and repeatedly declare it. It is expressly said, Mark xvi. 9, “ Now when Jesus was risen *early the first day of the week*, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene.” Here, in opposition to his rising late, or at the close of day, he is said to *rise early*, or some hours after the beginning of it; and instead of rising on the Jewish Sabbath, or last of the week, he is expressly said to rise on the *first of the week*, which is farther described to be that day whose morning commenced *when the Sabbath was past*, ver. 1, 2. or, *in the end of the Sabbath*, Matt. xxviii, 1. Let us next see whether this first day of the week, or day which immediately followed the Jewish Sabbath, was indeed the *third day* from his crucifixion; and here the Scripture is as clear and express as in the former. Mark says (chap. xv, 42.) that he was crucified on “ the preparation, that is, *the day before the Sabbath.*” Luke says (chap. xxiii. 54.) “ that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on.” See also John xix. 31, 42. Now the day immediately *before* the Jewish Sabbath is that which we call Friday, and so the day *after* the Sabbath must be the *third day*. We see also what the women did on these three successive days. On Friday, the day of the crucifixion, *they prepared the spices*, Luke xxiii. 56.—the next day, being our Saturday, “ *they rested the Sabbath day*, according to the commandment,” verse 56.—and on the third day, being “ the first day of the week, very early in the morning, *they came unto the sepulchre,*” chap. xxiv. 1. But lest any possibility of doubt should remain, it is said, that two of the disciples went *that same day* (viz. the first day of the week, ver. 1.) to Emmaus, ver. 13. and relating to Jesus, “ how the chief priests “ and rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, “ and crucified him,” ver. 20. they add, “ and besides all “ this, to-day is *the third day* since these things were “ done,” ver. 21. Here then it is expressly affirmed, that the first day of the week was the *third day* since they crucified him, and so he must have risen that day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. xv. 4.) as he says himself, “ Thus

" Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead *the third day*," Luke xxiv. 46. Those, therefore, who believe the Scriptures, cannot possibly doubt either that Jesus rose *the third day*, or that that third day was the *first day of the week*.

I confess it was not easy for you to get over these stubborn passages, without flatly denying the truth of the Scriptures. However, you have acquitted yourselves pretty well by setting the Scripture in opposition to itself, and punning a little upon the phraseology. In Matt. xxvii. 63. and Mark viii. 31. it is said he should rise again, *μετα, after three days*, which seems to imply that he should rise on the fourth day, or *after* three days were fully expired; and, if this was not the case, you ask, How could his own words be fulfilled? Matt. xii. 40. " For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," p. 4. Yet I suppose you know, that the expression, *after three days*, is of the same import with *on the third day*, and that it is frequently used in Scripture in that sense. Thus Rehoboam said to the people, " Come to me again *AFTER* three days. So Jeroboam, and all the people, came unto Rehoboam on the third day, as the King bade, saying, Come unto me *ON* the third day," 2 Chron. x. 5, 12. Here it is plain, that the expression " *AFTER* three days," ver. 5. means the same thing with " *ON* the third day," ver. 12. According to the Scripture method of reckoning, a part of a day is put for the whole, and so the first and last days of any transaction are counted into the number, though a small part of them should have been employed therein: thus Esther says, (chap. iv. 16.) " Fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night nor day, and then will I go in unto the King." Now, had they fasted three days and three nights complete, she must have gone in to the King on the fourth day; but we read (ch. v. 1.) that she went in to the King *on the third day*; so that they fasted only one full day, and part of the first and last. So Luke ii. 21. " When eight days were accomplished for the circumcision of the child, they called his name Jesus;" yet the day of his birth, and that of his circumcision, were two of these days, and the complete days were only six. Again,

Luke ix. 28. " About *eight days after* these sayings, he " took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a " mountain to pray." Here *eight days after* signifies *on the eighth day from* these sayings, in which space there were only six complete days, and part of two; accordingly, Matt. xvii. 1. and Mark ix. 2. reckon only upon the complete days, and call them *six*. And so also, when it is said Jesus met with his disciples again *after eight days* (John xx. 26.) it must signify that he met with them *on the eighth day*, or after the commencement of the eighth day from his former meeting, which was the first day of the week. According to the same rule of reckoning, Jesus is said to be " three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," Matt. xii. 40. for the Jews counted the night with its day as a part of it. It is plain, that the Jews, to whom he spoke these words, did not understand him to mean three complete days and nights; for thus they address Pilate, " Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while " he was yet alive, *After three days* I will rise again," which expression has been shewn to signify *on the third day*, and so they desire the sepulchre should be made sure only *until the third day*, Matt. xxvii. 63, 64. whereas had they understood him to mean three complete days and nights, they behoved to ask the guard until the fourth day. But what fully fixes the sense of the expressions, *after three days*, and *three days and three nights*, is the repeated declaration of Jesus himself, that he would rise again *the third day*, viz. from his crucifixion. See Matt. xvi. 21. ch. xvii. 23. ch. xx. 19. ch. xxvii. 64. Mark ix. 31. ch. x. 34. Luke ix. 22. ch. xviii. 33. ch. xxiv. 7, 46. Now, had he been every hour and minute of three days and three nights in the grave, it was impossible he should have risen on the third day, it must infallibly have thrown his resurrection to the fourth. If to these considerations we add, that the gospel history relates it as a matter of fact that he actually did rise on the third day (as has been shewn) it must either be admitted that the above expressions mean the same thing, or that Jesus did not speak uniformly, or know certainly the day of his resurrection.

To sum up the argument then on this head. The Scripture affirms repeatedly, that Jesus rose from the dead *on the third day* after his crucifixion. This you deny;
ask,

ask, How can forty hours be a part of three days? and call it a juggle, p. 4. *Ergo*, the Scripture is false.—Jesus foretells that he would rise again *the third day*. This you confute from his own words, where he says he should rise *after three days*, and be *three days and three nights* in the heart of the earth; for how can part of three days be three complete days and nights? p. 4. and how can the word *after* signify *before*? p. 5. *Ergo*, Jesus spoke contradictions, and was a false prophet.—The Scripture affirms that Jesus rose *early on the first day of the week*: but you affirm, that he was risen before the end of the Jewish Sabbath, and that it is uncertain on what day he rose: therefore the Scripture is false in this also.—Permit me to add another argument fairly deducible from the former. The Scripture testimony is the main evidence we have that Jesus rose at all: but this testimony is found to be false in the circumstances of the resurrection: *Ergo*, it must be so also, or at least of doubtful authority, as to the resurrection itself.

Having thus wound up the strength of your arguments on this part of the subject, proceed we next to what you say of Christ's finishing his work, and entering into his rest. This, you say, he did when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, and *when his flesh rested in the grave in hope!* p. 6, 7.—The scripture indeed shows, that he glorified his father on the earth, both by his doctrine and wonderful works, that he finished the work that was given him to do as a minister of the circumcision, and became obedient unto death for the sins of the world; and that this suffering obedience being finished, according to all that was written of him, he bowed the head and gave up the ghost. But then it does not represent him as entering into his rest whilst he continued in the state of the dead, or remained under the power of death, but speaks of this as the last step of his humiliation, and part of that curse which he endured in the room of the guilty. The grave is not considered as his rest, though his flesh rested there for a little while in hope; but, on the contrary, is set forth as a prison, from the pains of which he was loosed at his resurrection, Acts ii. 24. From this power of death, and prison of the grave, he hopes to be delivered, when he says, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy

“ One to see corruption,” Psal. xvi. and accordingly he was saved from death, overcame it, and entered into his rest, when he obtained eternal life from the dead, for himself and all his people, as the reward of his obedience unto death. This is the Scripture doctrine upon that subject, and it is a very galling doctrine to me : but it refreshes me not a little to find, that you have made him *cease from his works* before he had overcome death, or risen again for the justification of his people ; and that you have assigned him his *rest* in the prison of the grave, under the power of death ; for hereby it is evident, that his sacrifice was not satisfactory, else he would have been discharged from that prison, and obtained another kind of rest ; and it also shows, that his followers have no ground to expect any other rest than the grave, for they can obtain no other rest than that into which he hath entered.

You proceed next to deny, that the Holy Ghost was poured down upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, p. 8. But let us see what the Scripture says concerning the time of that event, Acts ii. 1. “ And when the day of “ Pentecost was fully come”—These words must certainly mean, when it had actually commenced or arrived, for they express neither more nor less. The word *συνεληλυθαι*, *fully come*, has a respect to the words of the institution of that feast : “ Ye shall count to you from the “ morrow after the Sabbath (*i. e.* from the 16th of Nisan) “ seven Sabbaths *complete*, even to the morrow after the “ Sabbath shall ye number fifty days ” Lev. xxiii. 15, 16. Now (says the historian) “ when the day of Pentecost “ was fully come,” *i. e.* when the full reckoning of seven Sabbaths was completed, and the fiftieth day now arrived. The question then is, Whether the fiftieth day, or Pentecost, fell that year on the first day of the week. That it did so is demonstrable.—On the 14th of the month, at even, Jesus eat the passover according to the commandment, Exod. xii. 6—11, which was Thursday evening, the night before he suffered.—The next day was the 15th, being Friday, the day of his crucifixion, and the first day of unleavened bread, which was appointed a Sabbath or day of holy convocation among the Jews, Lev. xxiii. 6, 7, 15.—The day following was the 16th, being our Saturday and Jewish weekly Sabbath : this was the second day
of

of unleavened bread, and the morrow after the annual festival Sabbath, and so the day at which the reckoning of fifty days began, Lev. xxiii. 15. Now, the seventh Sabbath from this made forty-nine days, and consequently the morrow after, which was the fiftieth day, or Pentecost, must have been the first day of the week.

In opposition to this Scripture account of the matter, you affirm, that the expression, "when the day of Pentecost *was fully come*," signifies *some days after*, i. e. in order to its being *fully come*, it must be *fully past*. You further observe, "That as it was a moveable feast, no weekly Sabbath can be fixed on it." But here we ought to notice, that they do not fix a weekly Sabbath on the Jewish Pentecost: their argument runs thus: The effusion of the Spirit was on the day of Pentecost; but Pentecost fell that year on the first day of the week; therefore the effusion of the Spirit was on the first day of the week. However, you have fully confuted this argument by shewing, that Pentecost did not *fully come* that year till it was *fully past and gone!* and therefore it could not happen upon any day of the week. Thus, by shuffling it about like thimble and ball, you have made it a moveable feast indeed.—Again, you observe, that the effusion of the Spirit was the accomplishment of an antient prophecy. Now, this affords a demonstrable argument against the Sabbath; for how could a Sabbath be kept upon a day whereupon any antient prophecy was fulfilled? The very supposition is ridiculous!

But what pleases me exceedingly, is the method in which you set aside the Scripture precedents for observing the first day of the week.

In entering upon this part of the argument, I shall take notice of your criticism upon *μία τῶν σαββάτων*, which the translators render *the first day of the week*, but which you would have to signify *a certain Sabbath—some Sabbath day, —any day of the week*, p. 14, 15. However, I think our argument has no need of this criticism to support it. I am afraid it will rather prejudice our cause with any who have the least knowledge of the Greek. In the Septuagint the word *μία* usually signifies *first*, when joined with days, weeks, and months. Thus, Gen. i. 5. *ἡμέρα μία* signifies

signifies *the first day*; and *ἡμέρα μίᾱ τῷ μηνὶ* is *the first day of the month*, as in Exod. xl. 2. Ezra iii. 6. ch. x. 17. Again, where the word *day* or *month* is not expressed, it is to be understood and supplied, as in Lev. xxiii. 24. Numb. i. 1, 18. ch. xxix. 1. ch. xxxiii. 38. Deut. i. 3. Exek. xxvi. 1. ch. xxxii. 1. ch. xlv. 18. Hag. i. 1. ch. ii. 1. in all which places, and many more, *μίᾱ τῷ μηνὶ* signifies *the first day of the month*, though the word *day* is always, and sometimes the word *month* itself, omitted: so that it is demonstrably clear, that *μίᾱ* signifies *the first day*, whether it be of a week, month, or year. Lastly, as to the word *σαββάτων* (literally, *of Sabbaths*) it can have no other meaning than *of the week*, as the translators have rendered it; for there is no other word in all The New Testament which signifies *week* but itself. The Pharisee says, “I fast twice *τῷ σαββάτῳ*,” Luke xviii. 12. he certainly must mean *in the week*; for to fast twice *on the Sabbath* would imply that he took his dinner that day, and, if it was a hearty one, he had little cause to boast of his fasting. The truth is, the Jews used the word *Sabbath* to express a *week*; thus seven weeks are termed *seven Sabbaths*, Lev. xxiii. 15. Their weeks being divided by the Sabbath, were denominated by it, and the days of the week were numbered with relation to it; and so *the first of the Sabbath* means *the first day of the week*, or the first of the seven days which ended with the Sabbath. But what puts this beyond all possibility of doubt is, that the day on which the women went to the sepulchre is termed *μίᾱ τῷ σαββάτῳ*, Matt. xxviii. 1. Mark xvi. 2. Luke xxiv. 1. John xx. 1. (which is the same Greek expression that is used, Acts xx. 7. and 1 Cor. xvi. 2.) and, if we inquire what day that was, we are told it was that day whose morning began *at the end of the Jewish Sabbath*, Matt. xxviii. 1. or *when the Sabbath was past*, Mark xvi. 1. Thus it is demonstrated, that *μίᾱ τῷ σαββάτῳ* is *the first day of the week*. However, I am very sensible of your good intentions in this criticism. I have been a great critic and commentator myself, and my first attempt this way was crowned with notable success in the affair of the forbidden fruit. There you may see my skill in setting aside the plain sense which

which appeared from the very "face of the words," (on which you affirm no stress is to be laid, p. 13, 14, 15.) and I must own to you, that I am not a little elated to find, that, whilst you professedly depise the example of the Apostles, you should so faithfully copy mine. But, as I said before, our cause stands in no need of this criticism.

In Acts xx. 7. it is said, "And on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them"—You affirm that this meeting was *purely occasional*; and that the end of it was to see Paul, who was ready to depart on the morrow, p. 14. But the text says expressly, they *came together* for another end, viz. *to break bread* (though, no doubt, they would be very glad both to see and hear Paul.) And we are farther told, that when they were thus come together for the express purpose of breaking bread, Paul took that *occasion* of preaching to them; so that the breaking of bread was plainly *intentional*, and the very design of their meeting, whilst Paul's preaching was *occasional* upon their being met. We do not read of his calling the disciples together as he did the elders of the church of Ephesus, ver. 17. but he embraced the opportunity of preaching to them "when they came together on the first day of the week *to break bread*." He had staid there all the other days of the week, ver. 6. in all which time we have no account of their meeting to break bread, till this last day of his stay, which was the first day of the week. Why was their meeting delayed till the last, if it was not their stated day of meeting? In short, it too plainly appears that Paul staid there till their usual day of meeting, that he might have an opportunity of partaking with them in the Supper, preaching to them, and taking his leave of them, which when he had done, he departed immediately. But to grant this would be to allow a plain example for keeping the first day of the week; and therefore you did very well to deny it *in the very face of the words*. I would not thank a person for maintaining my cause where the Scripture authority was dubious; but to do it boldly, in opposition to the clear light of Scripture flashing in his face, is highly meritorious. It has been already observed, that Paul staid a whole week at Troas, and that we read of no church meeting there till the first day of the week. Now,
if

if (as you affirm) that meeting was purely occasional, it follows, that they had no ordinary stated day of meeting at all. This is just what I wanted to appear, and what you ought to have been more explicit upon. But even granting it to have been a stated meeting, then it must follow (as you justly observe) that the circumstances recorded to have happened on it, must be stated also: "An Apostle must continue his speech until midnight, then, after raising a young man to life, he must go up, break bread, talk a long while, even until break of day, and then depart;" otherwise the first day of the week cannot be kept according to this example. But should they own that these things are impossible, then let them give up all pretensions to their keeping the first day of the week, seeing they cannot follow out the very precedent they found upon.

But admitting, that the Apostles, and first churches under their care, should have kept the first day of the week (which indeed we cannot well deny) yet you have clearly proved, that their example can be no rule to succeeding Christians: your words are, "But even granting that the Apostles met regularly on the first day of the week, how shall we know that they had an express precept to this very purpose, from the Lord, before he ascended?" p. 11. Some may reckon this a little bold; but indeed it is needless to trifle any longer in this matter. This discovers the true ground upon which your argument stands. Had it not been for argument's sake, you had no occasion to trouble your heads about what day Jesus rose, whether he rose or not, or whether the Apostles and first Christians kept the day of his resurrection or not; for though all these things were granted, the matter stands just where it was, as to the lawfulness of keeping it; for how shall we know that the Apostles had any precept for so doing? Might they not, in this instance, be guilty of will-worship? and certainly they were so, if they had not an express precept to this very purpose from Jesus *before he ascended*; for as to what is pretended to be revealed to them afterwards by the Spirit, it is not much to be depended upon. Now, as we read of no express precept given them for this purpose, it necessarily follows they had none, and so were guilty of superstition and will-worship. How audacious then

then must it have been in the Apostles to set themselves up for patterns and ensamples to other Christians, as they so often do! See Acts xx. 33—35. 1 Cor. iv. 16, 17. ch. xi. 1, 2. Philip iii. 17. ch. iv. 9. Heb. xiii. 7. The argument from apostolic example, proceeds upon the supposition that they were infallible, and could do nothing against the truth; but this is only begging the question, whilst the contrary is too evident. Did not Peter deny his Master with oaths, and afterwards dissimulate and temporise for fear of the Judaizers? and did not Paul and Barnabas scold one another heartily on their difference about Mark? Are these the men who must be taken for patterns? and must we from such practices infer divine precepts? For shame! yet this must be done according to the argument. In short, to affirm the infallibility of the Apostles, either in their doctrine or practice, is downright Popery, and contrary to the true principles of the reformation.

You rightly observe, that if the Apostles had received any precept about the first day of the week, they must have been the most unfaithful of all men in not leaving it on record, p. 11, 13. It will not acquit them from this charge to show, that they delivered this precept to the first churches, and recorded their own, and the example of these churches, for the imitation of all succeeding Christians; for how do we know but they might teach for doctrines the commandments of men, and so exemplify and countenance this practice without any authority from their Master, as has already been hinted? To have been faithful in this matter, required, that they should not only record the practice, but show how they came by the precept. They should have given it under their hand, that they received it from Jesus before he ascended; for what is not so recorded, and thus authenticated, we are at full liberty to deny. And, according to this rule, we might produce many instances of their unfaithfulness; for they teach many things for which they do not *expressly* produce their Master's authority, and they neglect to teach some other things for which they had an express command. To instance in the latter; they did not deliver the ordinance of the Supper to any of the churches they planted but to that of Corinth, which is demonstrable from this, viz. that *it is not recorded*. What an unfaithfulness was here! Some would *infer* they did from
various

various considerations, though it be not expressly recorded; but this is all a juggle. You can admit of no *inferences* here without destroying your own argument, and being wise above what is written; but must insist for it in so many words, and, if this cannot be produced, then you may freely deny it, as I taught the Sadducees in a similar case, Luke xx. 27—39. and even though it could be shown in express words, yet it would not prove the point, seeing (as you observe) little stress can be laid on the face of Scripture words.

But you have a charge of a more heinous nature against the Apostles than any of the former. It is pleaded, that Paul ordered the churches of Corinth and Galatia to make their collection for the poor on the first day of the week, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. In answer to which you observe, that he expressly forbids the churches of Galatia to observe days, Gal. iv. 10. They alledge, however, that the days there prohibited to be kept are only the Jewish days, as is evident from the context, and that the first day of the week must be excepted. If this were the case, you reply, "The manner of the Apostle's address is utterly inexplicable, and might do well to come from a heathen oracle, whose custom it was to peep and mutter, and when the thing spoken of came out otherwise than the devil (for that was the oracle) intended, then the words had been misunderstood." p. 17. This assertion is so grateful to me, both in its matter and spirit, that I cannot pass it over without a little elucidation. It amounts in plain English to this, that if the first day of the week be excepted in the above prohibition, then it will follow that the Apostles spoke by the spirit of the devil, or something as bad. This conclusion comes from this self-evident proposition, viz. That when in any injunction or prohibition there is an exception meant, without being expressed, that is an infallible characteristic of a peeping and muttering devil. Now, by this rule, it is easy to prove the Apostles such. Paul forbids the Colossians to be subject to ordinances (ch. ii. 20) and yet means to except the gospel ordinances without expressing it; therefore he must have been a peeping and muttering devil! And, not only the Apostles, but Jesus himself speaks sometimes with a tacit exception: thus, John vi. 27. "Labour not for the meat which per-
"risheth,"

"riseth," &c. If he here excepts the labour of the working poor for their daily bread, you know what must follow according to your argument; I had rather you should speak it plainly out than I; for, to tell you the truth, even I myself do not always go the full length of some of my zealous religious servants, who have not scrupled to call the Master of the house Beelzebub, whilst I confessed him the Son of God; nor to give the same reproachful epithet to those of his household, whilst I owned them the servants of God that shewed the way of salvation. But if men will vindicate the Apostles from this charge, we may freely grant them the alternative: let then, Col. ii. 20, be understood as setting aside every ordinance whatever without exception, and then the first day of the week, and all the service of it must fall of course. Thus, whatever way we understand these texts, they make equally against our adversaries.

I shall only take notice of another of your arguments on this head, which deserves to be printed in letters of gold; your words are, "But after all, had we even the apostolic practice on record, it would never supply the place of an express precept in so many words; otherwise the unbelievers of old, who offered their sons and daughters to devils, would have been blameless, and might plead the example of Abraham.—Thus we may see how far even the purest examples will lead us," p. 12.—Here you grant our adversaries all they can demand, which, after all, will not avail their plea. Admitting then, that the Apostles and first Christians had an express precept for observing the first day of the week, even as Abraham had for offering up his son; yet it will not follow, that succeeding Christians are bound by the commandments given the Apostles and first churches, any more than the idolaters were by the peculiar command given to Abraham. Were there any force in the argument from *example*, the idolaters had a just plea, and were blameless; for where could they have a clearer example for offering their children to devils, than in Abraham offering his son to God; or a juster excuse for *disobeying* the divine command, than in Abraham's *obedience* to it; or a better precedent for their *infidelity*, than in this instance of Abraham's *faith*? In short, this example was every way directly in point; and if any precept

cept given to one, could warrant the obedience of others, surely that given to Abraham must fully have justified their cruel idolatry : yet their idolatry is highly blamed notwithstanding the command given to Abraham. If the Apostles and first Christians had a command to keep the first day of the week, they did well in obeying it ; but succeeding Christians have nothing to do with it, unless they had another precept for themselves to warrant their practice also. Upon the whole, I cannot but notice how mean-spirited it is for men to plume themselves on being *apes of the Apostles*, * as if true religion consisted in mimicry. For shame ! shall the noble, independent spirit of man, which possesses the power of self-direction, be degraded into a servile imitator ? But if men will still insist that they ought to follow the Apostles, let them do it to purpose ; let them forsake all, preach the gospel through all the world, and work miracles, and lay down their lives to confirm it ; if they decline this, let us hear no more of their pretensions to apostolic example.

After having brought the controversy to this issue, it would be superfluous to spend time upon the other arguments for the first day of the week, such as Psal. cxviii. 24. Heb. iv. Rev. i. 10. for what has been already observed precludes every other plea.

Having thus effectually cut out the first day of the week from being a day of holy convocation among Christians, you proceed next to set aside *public teaching*, and indeed this has a necessary connection with the other. Your words are, “ Public teaching is now ceased ; for the days
“ are come, when they shall not teach every man his
“ neighbour, and his brother, saying, Know the Lord, &c.
“ These are the very words of the Holy Ghost ; we refer
“ you to the passage, Heb. viii. where you will see, that
“ to deny that these days are come, is, in fact, to deny
“ the whole testimony of God. But, we would now ask,
“ what is it that those, who take to themselves the
“ name of public teachers, have to declare that is not
“ already declared in the testimony of God ?” p. 39. This argument against public teaching, or preaching the gospel, is undeniable : I can add nothing to it, but shall
only

* For this expression, I am obliged to my worthy friend Mr. Duncan. See his pamphlet.

only observe, how inconsistent the Apostles were upon this head. They knew very well that Jeremiah had prophesied against public teaching, ch. xxxi. as appears by its being quoted Heb. viii. ; they also knew, that the days were come wherein that prophecy was fulfilled ; yet so little understanding had they of the true meaning which you have now discovered of that prophecy, that, in express contradiction thereto, they go about every where teaching and preaching the gospel : they represent it as one of the effects of Christ's ascension, his giving gifts of various kinds unto men, for the purpose of teaching and edifying his body, Eph. iv. 8—14. nor did they content themselves with committing the gospel to writing, and so deliver men the testimony of God in manuscript, but they continued as public teachers all their lives. This is the more unaccountable, when we consider, that they acknowledge even their own teaching to be of no avail, and quite needless : " I have planted (says Paul) and Apollos watered ; but God gave the increase ; so then, neither is " he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but " God that giveth the increase," 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. Again, " But the anointing which you have received of him abideth in you ; and ye need not that any man teach you, " but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and " is truth, and is no lie." 1 John ii. 27. Paul owns, that in all his teaching, he said " none other things than " those which the prophets and Moses did say should " come," Acts xxvi. 22. so that, by his own confession, your question might very justly be put to him ; What had this Apostle to declare that was not already declared in the testimony of God ? To declare what has been already declared, is doing nothing to the purpose. Unless a man can teach some new thing, something that has not been declared in the testimony of God (as you observe) he ought not to take to himself the name of public teacher.

But, if some will still juggle on this prophecy, as they do upon Gal. iv. 10. and affirm, that it does not mean to cut out the teaching of the Apostles, but only that of ordinary pastors and teachers ; yet this will not mend the matter, or reconcile the conduct of the Apostles with our, (*i. e.* the true) sense of that prophecy ; for they not only taught themselves, but also ordained pastors and teachers in the

the

the churches, Acts xiv. 13. and those whom they thus ordained, they direct to ordain others, Tit. i. 5. charging them to commit what they had heard of them to faithful men who should be able to teach others also, 2 Tim. ii. 2. They set down the characters by which these succeeding teachers were to be chosen, 1 Tim. iii. Tit. i. and give large directions how such are to behave themselves in the house of God, as well in their private as public ministrations of teaching, exhorting, and ruling. See Rom. xii. 6—9. Acts xx. 18—36. Epistles to Timothy and Titus, 1 Pet. v. 1—5. And, on the other hand, they exhort the flock to obey their leaders, and subject themselves; “for they watch for their souls as those that must give an account,” Heb. xiii. 17.—“to know them who labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly for their work’s sake,” 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. These public teachers are called *Stewards*, Tit. i. 7. and, if we consider what Jesus says of these stewards, Luke xii. 42—47. we shall find they are an order of men who will be employed in his service *until he come again*, when some of them shall be approved, and others not; which shows that public teachers were intended to continue in the churches unto the end of time. How astonishing is it, that a standing order of public teachers should be thus instituted by the Apostles in opposition to so plain a prophecy, and when the days had already come in which they ought to have ceased! However, you can be at no loss to see what use is to be made of this disagreement of the Apostles and prophets; but a hint is enough to the wise.

You observe, that the Scripture allows no provision for public teachers, and that the power to exact a maintenance was peculiar to the Apostles, p. 41. If indeed public teaching be not a Scripture institution, there can be no maintenance allowed teachers; but as we have seen, that (contrary to Jer. xxxi. 34.) the Apostles appointed teachers, and gave directions for their conduct in the churches after their departure, and when the canon of revelation was to be completed; so they also ordain, that a maintenance be given to these public pastors and teachers by those who are taught of them; and show, that they have the same right to it that the Apostles had, viz. such a right as the priests had

had to live by the altar, or the labourer had to his hire, as the planter of a vineyard had to the fruit, or the feeder of a flock to the milk, 1 Cor. ix. 7—13. “ If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather ? ” ver. 12. Here Paul pleads the power of the Apostles in this, from the acknowledged power of other teachers ; and he is speaking only of such ordinary teachers, where he exhorts, “ Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine ; for the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn ; and the labourer is worthy of his hire,” 1 Tim. v. 17, 18. “ Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things,” Gal. vi. 6. Here the same right to maintenance which Jesus gave the Apostles when he sent them forth to preach the gospel (Mat. x. 10. Luke x. 7.) is given to the elders and public teachers in the churches. I had a number of servants then, especially in the church of Corinth, who as strenuously disputed this power as you do now, and insinuated that the very Apostles themselves were wanting to make a gain of them : to cut off occasion from such, Paul chose rather to work for his bread than use his just right, and what was lacking to him the brethren from other churches supplied, 2 Cor. xi. 7—16. But still he maintains, that “ the Lord had ordained, that those who preach the gospel (whether Apostles or ordinary teachers) should live of the gospel,” 1 Cor. ix. 14. But then, if you were to admit this, many bad consequences would follow. It would be supporting an order of men which are now entirely useless ; it would show your respect for teaching, which is now abrogated ; it would be showing, in hypocrisy, a proof of your love to the gospel, for which you have no value ; it would be a tacit acknowledgment that you needed instruction, though the time is now come when you are entirely above it, and have declared your *full determination* against it, p. 49. and, which is worst of all, it would oblige you to some self-denial in giving, which I suppose you are not very fond of, it being contrary to that cardinal virtue of covetousness. Yet you seem very zealous for the duty of collecting for the poor, p. 47. when you might have known that it was as disagreeable to me as contributing to the maintenance of public teachers.

However,

However, I have no cause of umbrage upon this head ; for I can allow my servants to make a noise about this with their tongues, if they avoid it in their practice ; and the way in which you bring it in shows, that your concern for the poor is much of the same kind with that of my faithful friend Judas. See John xii. 4—9.

I shall now conclude this letter with a word of exhortation, which, I hope, for your own honour, you will comply with. And,

1. Beware of meeting on the first day of the week for religious worship, and mind your worldly employment as on any other day. This is necessary to render your practice consistent with your professed principles ; for if, whilst you argue against the Sabbath, you yourselves are found assembling on that day, what can the world say of you, but that you have either some remaining conscience of a day, or that you are but timid professors, and are afraid of being punished by the civil magistrate ? And indeed the last appears but too plainly the case, where you say “ We think ourselves bound to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake ; whether it be to the King as supreme, or unto governors sent by him ; therefore we cease from worldly employment on that day,” p. 47. But you should remember, that the King does not so much as pretend to have instituted the first day of the week as he does a national fast ; he hath only interposed his authority for the observance of it among his subjects, from a notion that it is a Christian institution founded in the word of God. In this view you have entirely rejected it, and so oppose the views of the legislator. Not only so, but you have branded it as idolatrous thus to single out a day, and (as you express it) make people fall down and worship it ; you compare those who do so to the men against whom the prophet speaks, “ They have no knowledge who set up the wood of their graven image, and pray to a god that cannot save,” p. 38. You ask those who urge the duty of keeping it, “ Who gave you authority to add to, or take away from the word of God ?” and admonish them in these alarming words, “ O remember what the Lord saith in the last chapter of Revelation, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. Consider this and be afraid,

“ lest

“ lest he tear you in pieces when there is none to deliver. “ You take upon you to make laws for God—to be wiser “ than he; consider if you be stronger too,” p. 12, 48. Now, this being your view of the matter, do you really think that the King has got authority to make laws for God in matters of religion, and to add to the words of Scripture, as being wiser and stronger than he? May he lawfully single out a day, set up the wood of his graven image, and enjoin idolatry? And are you bound, for the Lord’s sake, to fall down to the King’s graven image and worship it? For shame! my brethren, be a little more consistent, and do not make yourselves a laughing stock. Not that I dislike idolatry; but I would not have you condemned out of your own mouth. You may perhaps plead, that whilst you meet for worship on that day, in obedience to the King, you have no conscience of the day, or its services, toward God, p. 41. Be it so; but then, though you should be thus religiously obeying men rather than God, and piously worshipping the King’s graven image instead of the Creator, without regard to his threatening of tearing you in pieces; yet men who do not understand your Christian liberty in this matter, will be ready to attribute your conduct in meeting on that day to some remains of the fear of God; and though, indeed, your publication may be thought sufficient to free you from that suspicion; yet it can never make your conduct consistent with your principles, whilst you make any particular distinction of that day.

2. Take heed that you do not teach or exhort one another on that, or any other day of the week, either separately or together. You have clearly shewn, from Heb. viii. that the days have now come when public teaching should cease; and that to deny this is to deny the whole testimony of God. But you should notice, that that passage, as well as the prophecy from whence it is taken, is fully as strong against private as public teaching: it as clearly forbids brethren to teach and exhort one another, as it prohibits pastors from teaching and feeding the flock; nay, the words seem more directly to point against the former; for they run thus, “ They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother,” &c. The expression *every man* seems to strike directly against every one pretending to have a right to teach, as if all were teachers, speak-
ers,